

brutal expedient of the anarchist. It would be only fair to give even a tyrant the benefit of a trial, but his tyrant is one who is in a state of war against the nation, and it is evident all through that his idea is that, in the interest of the State, the *salus populi*, the law as a rule shall take its course against a ruler proved guilty of serious crimes against the commonweal. He wrote his book, not so much to vindicate assassination as to vindicate the law from arbitrary encroachment. The ruler that systematically breaks the law by his oppression becomes in fact an outlaw, and must take his chance accordingly. And assassination was certainly not to the sixteenth century the hideous crime that it appears to us. It was an expedient practised by the potentates and parties of the age. The Protestants murdered the Duke of Guise and Cardinal Beaton, the Catholics Coligny, William of Orange, Henry III., and Henry of Navarre, and tried to murder Elizabeth. Philip II. practised murder as a fine art and Catherine de Medici gave to the world in the Massacre of St Bartholomew an object lesson in that art on the grand scale. It was reserved for Mary Stuart to incur the suspicion of the guilt of the murder of her own husband. Not that the conscience of the more moderate Catholics and Protestants did not revolt against the practice of murder for political or religious ends. But, in an age of intrigue, strife, and blood, passion was inclined to condone methods which reason and morality might condemn, and it was not for potentate or party in the sixteenth century to call Buchanan names for inculcating that a ruler who oppresses the people may summarily be put to death.

Not, then, as a philosophical treatise or as an exposition of constitutional law, but as a spirited protest of the right of a people, in a certain contingency, to protect itself from misgovernment by the only effective expedient in the circumstances, does the "De Jure" take its place in history. But its importance was by no means confined to the age in which it appeared. In view of its future influence, it was a manifesto for the seventeenth as well as the sixteenth century. It was published in 1579, though evidently written shortly after the events of 1567. It was condemned by the Scottish Parliament in 1584, but, in spite of renewed prohibitions and the bitter denunciations of royalist champions throughout the